



December 7, 1999

Mr. Craig Smith  
Deputy General Counsel  
Texas Workers' Compensation Commission  
4000 Interstate Highway 35  
Austin, Texas 78704

OR99-3540

Dear Mr. Smith:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Texas Public Information Act, chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 130064.

The Texas Workers' Compensation Commission (the "Commission") received a request for all information concerning a certain complaint. You assert that the requested information is excepted from required public disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.108, and 552.111 of the Government Code.

You assert that the requested information is an investigation file maintained by the Division of Compliance and Practices (the "division") that is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 402.092 of the Labor Code. Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Section 552.101 encompasses information deemed confidential by other statutes. Section 402.092(a) of the Labor Code provides:

(a) Information maintained in the investigation files of the commission is confidential and may not be disclosed except:

- (1) in a criminal proceeding;
- (2) in a hearing conducted by the commission;

(3) on a judicial determination of good cause; or

(4) to a governmental agency, political subdivision, or regulatory body if the disclosure is necessary or proper for the enforcement of the laws of this or another state or of the United States.

Pursuant to chapter 414 of the Labor Code, the division monitors the conduct of persons subject to the Texas Workers' Compensation Act for compliance with statutes and rules relating to workers' compensation. You state that the requested information concerns the possible violation of the Texas Labor Code, the Texas Workers' Compensation Act and the Commission's rules implementing the Texas Workers' Compensation Act. We agree that the investigation file is confidential under section 402.092. Therefore, the Commission must withhold the investigation file from disclosure pursuant to section 552.101.<sup>1</sup>

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at 877/673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

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<sup>1</sup>In light of our conclusion under section 552.101, we need not address your other claims.

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kay Hastings".

Kay H. Hastings  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

KHH/jc

Ref.: ID# 130064

encl. Submitted documents

cc: Troy Clark, D.C.  
16360 Park Ten Place  
Houston, Texas 77084  
( w/o enclosures)